

MATOT 2 - THE WAR AGAINST MIDYAN- TO REBALANCE THE SPIRITUAL WORLDS

The Baal-Peor incident detailed at the close of Parashat Balaq had caused a threefold spiritual crisis requiring the active intercession of Moshe and Israel. Initially Pinehas acts to avert the immediate most pressing issue of turning back the divine wrath upon Israel. 1 In Parashat Pinehas - God tells Moshe that the related infractions of Baal-Peor associated with idolatry and the matter of Cozbi a daughter of a Midianite prince - associated with sexual misconduct would also need to be rectified. 2 Moshe is told now in Matot that both of these infractions with their corresponding spiritual damage must be rectified via initiating a war against Midyan. These two rectifications of licentiousness and foreign worship are apparently referred to respectively in verse two as Niqmat Bene Yisrael - and in verse three as Niqmat YHVH - 3 It is imperative that we understand both the workings of idol worship as well as the damage associated with the Israelites having relations with female idolaters of Midyan. We can then properly appreciate our sages interpretation and elucidation of this war as well as the etymology of biblical words and phrases used to express it. Finally we hope to explain why the death of Moshe was dependent upon the spiritual successes of this war, acting as a precursor to his recording of the final biblical Sefer of Devarim.

UNAUTHORIZED RELATIONS WITH IDOLATORS

The holy act of relations consists of the male connecting and transferring to the female - spiritual sustenance and energy. It is essential that this be done in the proper time, place and manner as dictated by the halakha. Improper or unauthorized relations with a female idolater transfers holy spirituality of Israel to a foreign spiritual power. The transference of holiness to a foreign source is expressed by the Navi Hoshea in his admonishment of Israel - Banim Zarim Yuladu - You have given birth to foreign offspring. 4 This apparently was done on a large scale by Israel with the people of Midyan. The Torah places the blame squarely on Midyan in that they assailed Israel through trickery. 5 By causing Israel to transgress in this matter they as a nation accessed the holiness of Israel. The method to extract this holiness from the clutches of Midyan is termed Neqama - God proceeds to instruct Moshe -Neqom Niqmat Bene Yisrael Me'et HaMidyanim - 6 It is important for us to refrain from using the unimaginable elucidation of Neqama here as "revenge" but rather the word conveys that Israel must redress a spiritual in-balance in the celestial worlds that resulted from these transgressions of Israel. The holiness - the spiritual energy we forfeited over to Midyan will thereby Noqem - be elevated or redirected back to its source. 7 As the verse continues Me'et HaMidyanim - specifically the spirituality must be extracted "from" the Midyanim. R. HaAri teaches that our recital each morning of the chapter of Tehillim El Neqamot YHVH - is to serve as a powerful tool to extract and redress the holy sparks previously trapped due to our transgressions. 8 Our elucidation of the Torah expression of Neqama as re-balance has its roots in the Talmud. It teaches that it appears as an expression of balance found in between the divine names of El related to judgement and of YHVH related to kindness. 9 Moshe was then given instructions as to the nature of those he is to gather for this war. In verse Gimal the term HeHalesu is used and in the fulfillment of the instruct in verse Heh the term Haluse' is used. 10 When used as a passive principle - Halus - denotes those who are able to remove and withdraw the holiness from the usurpers. It is often used in this manner for example with regard to the discoloration of houses Ahar Hiles Et HaAvanim - after the stones have been removed; and again with regard to the ceremony of Halisa - VeHalesa Naalo Me'al Raglo she removes his shoe from his foot. 11 The success of their mission is noted where we are told that they had extracted the sparks - manifest physically as the spoils of war and brought it back to holiness - which is the warcamp of Israel. Vayavo'u ... Et HaShevi ... El HaMahane 12

THE REBUKE OF MOSHE - UNFINISHED WORK

The holy Avoda of Israel consists of establishing the Shekhina - the Divine Presence at its properly placed position at the bottom of the highest spiritual world of Asilut. There - she will act as a spiritual reservoir receiving all divine holiness from above and properly dispense it to Israel and the worlds below. Idol worship or Avoda Zara "so to say" replaces the Shekhina with a foreign reservoir allowing access to holiness to foreign sources. The Zohar explains that foreign access can apparently even be attached to an elevated level higher than that of the Shekhina - and "apparently" can even reach the Malkhuyot of Z'A or the replacement of the lower channels associated with Qudsha Berikh Hu. 13 In Sefer Melakhim it calls foreign worship associated with each respective level male and female - as Baal and Ashera. 14 It is obvious that the Holy warriors sent by Moshe were familiar with the fact that

they would need to kill the adult males of Midyan to fully remove the vestige of Baal-Peor - the foreign male from its usurped position. 15 Upon their triumphant return Moshe orders that the women who have known man and male children must also be killed - 16 as even the Shekhina representing the holy female reservoir had been replaced by Midyan. Through this they were told - you will bring about Niqmat YHVH - to remove the foreign powers and reestablish Qudsha Berikh Hu and his Shekhina in their holy place above.

A CONDITION TO THE DEATH OF MOSHE

The Torah teaches that Moshe's final commission would be this war with Midyan. "Take Neqama - then you shall be gathered unto your people. 17 The Neqamot or the rectifications to rebalance by Moshe and Israel were necessary pre-cursors for the revelation of Sefer Devarim and for that matter the entrance of Israel into the land. We explained above the infraction of foreign worship in fact allowed the Shekhina - the Divine Presence to be replaced with a foreign power. We know that the Shekhina in the formation of the letters of Yud Heh Vav Heh or YHVH is associated with the final Heh or the receptacle of all the shefa or upper three letters and the tip of the highest letter Yud that flows into it. Sefer Devarim the last of the biblical books is termed by our Sages Mishne Torah as it reflects and reveals all of the previous four. 18 R. HaAri in the Kavanot associated with the reading on the night of Hoshana Rabbah relates this Sefer to the Shekhina and the final letter Heh of the YHVH - 19 This spiritual level is also associated with the land of Israel which represents the spiritual reservoir thru which all of the world is to be nourished. 20 The Talmud teaches that the consequence for the sins of forbidden relations and idolatry - causes invaders to exile the inhabitants of the land. 21 The inhabitant of the spiritual land is the Shekhina while that of the corresponding physical land below is Israel. These transgressions if not rebalanced would have kept the holy inhabitants out of their respective lands and left in exile - being replaced by foreign powers. We can now understand why the war was imperative to be carried out prior to the death of Moshe. He was to reveal the final light belonging to the Shekhina to the world - This is Sefer Devarim and the final Heh of the Holy Divine name. If the transgression associated with Baal Peor had not been assuaged - then this light of Devarim would have been given over to this foreign source. Furthermore the entry to the physical land would have been stymied. The stronghold of foreign powers as expressed physically by the foreign nations in the land - could not have been removed by Yehoshua and his armies.

REINTEGRATING THE HOLINESS BACK INTO THE CAMP OF ISRAEL

On selecting individuals to accomplish the task to remove holiness from the Midyanim - Moshe had to consider the selection of pious individuals. According to the Midrash he did just this - as he knew and taught that if one commits transgressions he will be subject to the negative husks injuring the ill equipped warrior. 22 The personal success of those who fought is expressed in verse forty nine - Velo Nifqad Mimenu Ish - that the accuser was not able to even overcome one of us. 23 However it is apparent that negativity had attached to the warriors who had physically killed the Midyanim. In addition the spoils were not free of foreign impurity and would have to be spiritually cleansed prior to incorporating them back into Israel. The Torah therefore follows with details of the required purification process to remove any vestige of impurity attached to the warriors and the spoils or sparks attained in the war. 24

Shabbat Shalom

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